

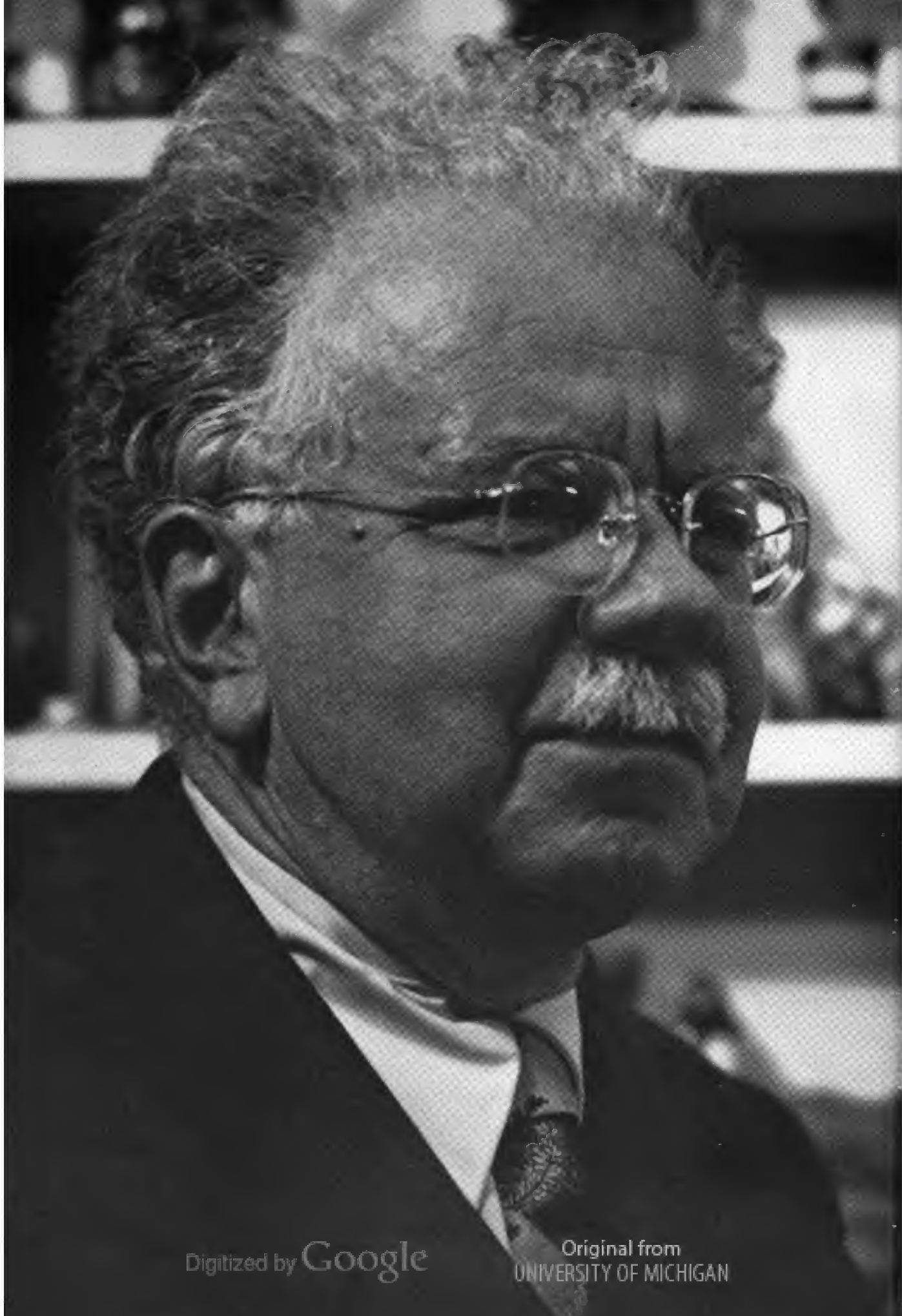
STORMY PASSAGE

*A Personal History Through Two Russian
Revolutions to Democracy and Freedom:
1905-1960*

W. S. WOYTINSKY

Introduction by Adolf A. Berle

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Those who are borne in lifeless years
Do not remember their past.
We, children of Russia's fearful times,
Forget nothing.
There is stillness. . . . The clangor of the tocsin
Has sealed our lips forever.
Our hearts, once full of exaltation,
Have been drained lethally.

A. BLOCK

Blessed is he who has walked this world
In its fateful hours. . . .
The gods have summoned him
To share their feast.
He may watch their sublime pageant,
He is admitted to their council,
Still on earth, yet as an Olympian,
He drinks immortality from their cup.

TH. TUTCHEV

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Introduction

by ADOLF A. BERLE

Stormy Passage is the autobiography of my late friend, Wladimir S. Woytinsky. It needs no introduction. Epic in quality, it is a contemporary contribution to heroic literature. This fact is important. In our era heroes have not been wanting. It is high time we knew them.

The American scholarly world and especially the labor movement have known Wladimir Woytinsky and Emma, his wife and colleague, for nearly three decades as quiet, effective, immensely learned scholars of economics and political science. Their works, *World Population and Production* and *World Commerce and Governments*, perhaps their best-known books in English, have been mines of information and ideas for many years. Few American readers realize that Wladimir Woytinsky had lived with and been a part of the Russian social movement since his student days in St. Petersburg; that he had entered the Russian revolution as a student in 1905; that he had been a consistent opponent of the Tsarist government; that he had known Lenin since 1906 and had broken with him in 1917. For a decade he had been in and out of imperial prisons, fortresses, death cells, and Siberian penitentiaries. As the Tsar fell, he preceded Lenin's return to Petrograd in 1917. He had been editor of *Izvestia* and part of the Petrograd Soviet when the moderate socialists were overcome by the rising and ruthless Bolshevik power. While exiled by the Tsarist government to Irkutsk he had met Emma, daughter of a Siberian building contractor, married her, and spent his honeymoon on the Mongolian border even as Russia disintegrated in defeat in World War I and loosed the forces of revolution throughout the world.

The passionate explosion in Petrograd, as Lenin overthrew Kerensky and hunted the moderates out of Russia, found Woytinsky on the Socialist instead of the Communist side. Once more he became a fortress prisoner. Facing a mob trial for his life (it was not the first occasion of the sort), he escaped the Red Guards. In the ensuing confusion, he and Emma made their way to Tiflis in the Caucasus. Thence he came once more to Europe, via Constantinople, as a representative of the then independent Republic of Georgia. When that country was wiped out by the Soviet Union in 1922, Woytinsky was in Italy, and in renewed tragedy as he watched Mussolini ride the tide of anarchy to Fascist dictatorship.

He then settled in the Weimar Republic of Germany. In his new exile he wrote in German and Russian his famous encyclopedic work (in seven volumes), *The World in Figures*. It was an instant European success. This established him as one of the foremost modern econo-

xiv *Introduction*

mists, and he joined forces with the German labor movement. He drafted a plan for the recovery of Germany as the depression of 1929-32 deepened. Revolutionary at the time, its doctrines are standard American thinking today. When, on March 5, 1933, Hitler swept the board in Germany, the two Woytinskys took up anew the weary road of exile, fleeing to Switzerland. Blocked there by Communist influence from getting a job in the International Labor Office at Geneva, Woytinsky and his wife came to the United States to "discover" America.

The odyssey was over, and high drama ended for them here.

But not their usefulness. Through a joint project of the Rockefeller Foundation and, I am proud to say, of the Twentieth Century Fund, he established himself once more at his work of economic analysis. He remade a superb academic reputation in America (as he had twice made it in Europe) and last year died in peace.

Homeric quality does not come from academic achievement, however great. Woytinsky fought as well as he wrote. He had great ideas, great hopes, great values, and, above all, intense humanity. This quality, indeed, led him to break early with the coldly inhuman Lenin. Repeatedly he backed his ideas, his values, his humane loyalties at risk of his life. He commanded the respect not only of colleagues and crowds but (it saved his life) of common criminals on their way with him to Siberian jails. He resisted the brute cruelty of doctrinaires in Moscow, in Rome, and in Berlin. Woytinsky was a scholar. He was more: he was a warrior for his values.

This autobiography will be a first source of history because of its author's contact with vast events. I think it will be even more important as record of a life-long affirmation of sensitive human courage, as living proof that men can transcend even catastrophic forces.

That is why I have—rightly, I believe—called the book heroic—and its quality epic.

ADOLF A. BERLE

Washington, D.C.
July 1, 1961

Preface

by W. S. WOYTINSKY

The distinction between an autobiography and memoirs is somewhat vague. Webster defines "autobiography" as "memoirs of one's life written by oneself" and "memoirs" as "a history or narrative composed from personal experience or memory; often, esp., an account of one's life or episodes in it, written by oneself." The difference between the two definitions may seem almost imperceptible, yet I wish to stress that this book has been planned and written as memoirs, not as autobiography. I believe an account of my life, dramatic and rich though it has been to me, will be of interest to the reader only insofar as it reflects the experience of my generation and the impact of historical and political events I observed as an eyewitness or in which I took part.

Though early youth forms fundamental moral convictions, the years must, of necessity, change the perspective of the observer. I was not the same person during the first revolutionary storm over Russia in 1905 as I was during the second revolution of 1917; my ideas in the 1950's, when I was touring Asia and Latin America lecturing on world economics and the United States, were not the same as were those in the 1930's, when I was working with labor unions in Germany. Nor can a narrator obliterate entirely events of great import in his personal life. Thus, with my marriage in 1916, comes a new set of personal pronouns: the *I*, *me*, and *mine* become *we*, *us*, and *ours*. And along with the political events—which, all in all, make a rather sad story for my generation—must come some of the mighty, strange, and magnificent wonders of our natural world. Without these, our life would not have been so rich as it was.

The events I describe—covering more than fifty years—are in no sense an attempt to record history. They are, rather, the events I observed, and especially those in which I participated. I have recorded them because I feel that a deeper understanding of Russia's two revolutions—those of 1905 and 1917—may help readers to understand more clearly today's central and most critical problem: the Soviet Union.

To cope with the conflict between West and East, between democracy and totalitarianism, the West needs a far better understanding of the character, origins, and historical background of the Soviet system than it now possesses. Its knowledge of the U.S.S.R. and Communism, based on records that are faked and censored by the Kremlin, is not sufficient. We must turn the spotlight on those years between 1905 and 1917, in which latter year the totalitarian police state, as we now know it, was born. Surely it may be said that Communism has had

many forerunners, beginning with the Oriental despotisms of antiquity. But in its present form it came out of Russia, and it has never cut the umbilical cord uniting it to that country.

Communism has surrounded itself with myths. The Communists are credited with the overthrow of Tsarism, the liberation of Russia, and its transformation from a country of illiterate muzhiks into a great industrial power. The common idea is that economic and cultural progress in Russia was ushered in by the Communist revolution. Accordingly, everything that Russia possesses of value is credited to the efforts of the men in the Kremlin.

Actually, Russia looks back at centuries of economic and cultural growth.

The November revolution represents a brief interruption of, rather than the beginning of, the country's cultural progress. Russia's industrialization and westernization were inaugurated in the first half of the eighteenth century by the reforms of Peter the Great. Subsequently her economic development paralleled that of Western European countries, lagging behind the most advanced of them but leaving many others in the rear. The contention of the Soviet leaders that Russia has been built under the Communist regime is sheer nonsense. What they can claim to their credit is the acceleration of progress along certain lines, an achievement that must be weighed against retardation of progress or setbacks in other directions.

On the eve of the revolution of 1917, Russia was a country of striking contrasts. It was primarily an agricultural country, richly endowed with almost all natural resources—coal, petroleum, iron ore, light metals, gold, silver, and platinum. But it was unevenly and only partially developed. It had the largest and most efficient cotton mills in Europe, and its textiles competed successfully with those of the British in Asia. It had modern steel mills that turned out bridges unequaled in the Eastern Hemisphere. Its shipyards not only met the needs of extensive river transportation but could also launch battleships and submarines. Its heavy locomotives, cannons, and rifles were considered among the best in Europe. Moreover, its industrial and mineral output was expanding steadily, though not rapidly enough to meet the needs of the growing population and the military requirements of the Empire.

True, the Russian educational system was inadequate. Some rural areas were poorly provided with elementary schools, but illiteracy was decreasing. The "illiterate muzhik" was disappearing. Though the network of high schools and universities was insufficient, the institutions that did exist were on a reasonably high academic level, providing students with an education comparable with that supplied by similar

schools in advanced Western European countries. Moreover, there were close ties between Russian and Western European science. It was common for Russian youths graduating from a university to complete their education abroad—in Germany, Belgium, Switzerland.

In the world of science, literature, and the arts, Russia was undeniably a Great Power. Its intelligentsia was outstanding not only for the quality of its education but also for its political idealism. In familiarity with foreign languages, foreign literature, and the arts, and in the extent of its travel abroad, the Russian intelligentsia was the most international in Europe—indeed, too international, too different from the common people of its own country in language, tastes, way of life, attire. The weakness of the intelligentsia lay in the lack of cohesion and mutual understanding between the “educated” and “non-educated” classes of the nation.

Part of the priceless cultural heritage that had fallen into the hands of the Communists was destroyed or dissipated in the terrible years of civil war, but gradually the new rulers of the nation learned to appreciate the “experts” and made full use of them in building the new economy.

Another myth that prevents a clear understanding of the nature of Communism is the legend that the Communists—and their predecessors, the Bolsheviks—played a decisive role in overthrowing Tsarism in Russia.

True, the political system in old Russia was obsolete and incompatible with the level of its cultural and economic development and the demands of its further progress. The country was run by an incompetent and corrupt bureaucracy, ready to side with landlords against peasants and with employers against workers. The “national” character of the regime was manifest in the oriental pageantry of Palace and Church and in the oppression of national and religious minorities, especially the Jews. But the repugnant features of this regime were offset to some extent by its weakness. The intellectuals traditionally opposed the government, and great Russian literature, with a few conspicuous exceptions such as Dostoevsky, was essentially liberal. The universities were hotbeds of liberalism. Most of the newspapers were liberal—they had to be, since their readers expected them to be critical of the government. Liberal and radical ideas were spreading more and more widely among the workers and the middle classes.

Reaction had held a firm grip over the nation under Alexander III, a rough and cruel despot. But the regime began to crack under his successor, Nicholas II, a timid and feeble-minded weakling who trusted nobody, surrounded himself with charlatans and adventurers, and brought the dynasty to an ignominious end. Thus Russia found

itself involved in a war with Japan, a contest for which it was utterly unprepared politically and technically. The chain of humiliating defeats it had suffered on land and sea opened the gate to the revolution of 1905, a broad national upheaval that was unanimous in the cities, though somewhat spotty in the villages. Although this revolution was crushed by force of arms, it left a deep impact on Russian life. Despite the regime of terror under Stolypin (first, Minister of the Interior and then Prime Minister), semblances of parliamentarism and vestiges of freedom persisted. Because the Tsarist government was weak and had no faith in itself between 1905 and 1917, the opposition was regaining ground.

The Bolsheviks played, in those years, a significant role but not a decisive one. I would hesitate to describe them as either the radical or orthodox Marxist wing of the Social Democratic party. Their distinctive characteristic, rather, was loyalty to their leader, Lenin—especially where questions of organization and tactics were concerned. Moreover, this group did not differ greatly from the rest of the Social Democratic party during the revolution of 1905, either in the famous general strike in October or in the armed revolt in Moscow in December of that year. Indeed, between 1905 and 1917, the Bolshevik group had almost completely disappeared from the scene, and in the overthrow of the Tsarist regime in March, 1917 (perhaps because of Lenin's absence), they took practically no part. The Tsarist regime was overthrown by a popular explosion, broader and more nearly unanimous than that of 1905. No one party can claim the credit or bear the responsibility for it. It was a spontaneous expression of the wrath of the people, brought to despair by the disgrace of continuous defeats and the tragic farce of Rasputin's rule over the country.

The Bolsheviks appeared on the scene much later. *Their* revolution—that of the “ten days that shook the world”—was directed against the political regime that had been established in Russia by the March revolution—that is, against the democratic Provisional Government. It was a riot of the army—more specifically, a riot of rear garrisons passively supported by the front regiments—and it was carried out against the wishes of the great majority of the people. Actually, in the election of the Constituent Assembly, held after the seizure of power by the Communists and under strong pressure by the new government, the Communist party got no more than one fourth of the popular vote. But the party did control the armed forces, and could dissolve the Constituent Assembly as easily as the Tsarist government had dissolved the refractory Duma. This sequence of events gives the lie to the widely publicized myth that the Communists liberated Russia from Tsarism.

Communist propaganda has succeeded in persuading many persons in the West that the Russian people have never enjoyed liberty or yearned for individual freedom, so that the regime the Soviets imposed upon them is in accord with their historical tradition and national character. The truth is that the liberation movement in Russia looks back at a long and dramatic history and has produced more thinkers and martyrs than have such movements in any other country. The movement had its ups and downs, but the Tsarist regime never succeeded in strangling the aspiration of Russia's people for freedom. Even after the Communist coup and the dispersion of the Constituent Assembly, they continued freedom's desperate struggle.

Only the future will show whether the ruthless extermination of opponents, the systematic indoctrination of new generations, and the terroristic methods of dictatorship have made the people forget their yearning for freedom and the relative liberty that existed in old Russia. Even if the Communists accomplish their objective, however, the contention that freedom is not valued by the Russian people, and that these people are preconditioned to serfdom by all their history, rests on insufficient knowledge of the country and its history.

The origin of the Soviet regime in Russia casts light on the place of Communism in the spectrum of liberal ideas. Certainly it cannot be considered the extreme, most uncompromising, expression of liberal philosophy. Its agreement with some liberal slogans is purely accidental and is determined by expediency. Fundamentally, its moral and philosophical premises and those of liberalism are mutually exclusive.

Let us picture a kind of graph of various political philosophies, the classifications to be based on the attitude of each toward the rights of the individual and its respect for human dignity and freedom. It will be on a one-dimensional scale, going from the extreme to moderate left and then from the moderate to the extreme right. At the extreme left would come the ideologies defending the absolute supremacy of the individual against the state or any other collective organization claiming to limit his rights. Next would come ideological systems protecting the rights and freedoms of the individual, but paying increased attention to the possibility of a conflict between his rights and the rights of other individuals and the community. Further, closer to the center, would be ranged ideologies preoccupied with a proper balance between the interests and rights of the community and those of individuals. These would be followed by theories dominated by the idea of the community, with the individual in a subordinate role, dependent on the collective. At the end of the array would come ideologies of a totalitarian state—the extreme expression of Fascism and Communism.

xx *Preface*

The Communists' deification of the state in the person of its head, their belief in the complete domination of the community over the individual, their contempt for personal freedom, their glorification of obedience as the highest civic virtue, their denial of democratic procedures and their reign through terror—all these are alien to the philosophy of liberalism but characterize other totalitarian systems, such as Fascism and Nazism. Philosophically, Communism, Nazism, and Fascism are not three political systems but one philosophy of government operating under different circumstances. The differences among them are quantitative rather than qualitative. They differ in the proportions in which the same elements are included and in the extent of ruthlessness. Mussolini was the most moderate of the three dictators; Hitler exceeded the two others in nationalistic frenzy; Stalin was unequalled in cruelty, self-deification, and in the degree to which he imposed thought control.

Criticism of Communism must not imply glorification of the old regime overthrown by the March revolution of 1917. The memory of Tsarism remains associated with the pogroms, the Ochrana, the massacre of January 9 in the streets of St. Petersburg, the Beilis affair, the torture chambers in Riga, Stolypin's gallows, the Rasputin scandal. The totalitarian police state of the Soviets did not come as the alternative to that regime but was built, rather, on the ruins of a democracy that had no chance to grow strong and mature during its brief life.

There is one fundamental difference between the Tsarist regime and the rule of the Soviets. The U.S.S.R. is a monolith ruled from the center, uniform politically, economically, and ideologically; old Russia, in contrast, was full of contradictions, with a weak central government and an ineffective local bureaucracy. The official orthodox-monarchistic ideology did not penetrate deeply into the conscience of the people, and its influence was undermined by the scandals in the last years of the Empire.

Moreover, the government, because of its ideological weakness, could not count on absolute submission of its officials to instructions. Among these officials were decent and intelligent persons who followed the voice of conscience rather than the orders of superiors. "Good men in bad places," as the Russian writer Korolenko described them, could be found on almost all levels of the bureaucratic ladder except its very summit, and this made life under the Tsarist rule easier for those who found themselves in open conflict with the regime.

But the Soviet state would treat such men as traitors and prosecute as saboteurs those failing to denounce them. Without total terror and indoctrination of the servants of the state, the Tsarist government was

unable to inspire in the people the paralyzing fear or fanatical obedience characteristic of the psychological climate of the Stalin era in the U.S.S.R. In old Russia, not infrequently even an orgy of brutality was marked by sparks of humanity. The Tsarist regime was a loose, weak despotism, full of loopholes and contradictions. The regime of the Soviets is a despotism as cold and rigid as a set of mathematical theorems.

The Tsarist regime also lacked two important attributes of totalitarian despotism: the Iron Curtain and thought control. Even in the days of the blackest reaction in Tsarist Russia thought control was unknown. Censorship was traditionally stupid and unable to stop the propagation of "subversive" ideas in the nation. Between pre-Communist Russia and the outside world there was a continuous coming and going, a continuous exchange of newspapers, books, and correspondence. The subjects of the Tsar, although harassed by gendarmes, at least had freedom of thought, and even some of those who served the brutal and decaying regime were able to preserve their personal integrity and decency.

During a gloomy stretch of my imprisonment in the Castle of Ekaterinoslav, then one of the most terrible dungeons in the Empire, the prison fell into the hands of a sadistic gang of guards. Mistreatment of prisoners became routine. Hundreds were killed. With the aid of my friends, I wrote a detailed report on conditions in the prison and managed to smuggle it out. It was printed in newspapers abroad and submitted to the Duma. The government ordered an investigation that resulted in ending the mistreatment of prisoners. Everyone who worked on the report knew he would be killed if the guards discovered what kind of information he was gathering. But everyone also knew that outside the prison there were newspapers, the Duma, public opinion. One took a chance.

Can one imagine a group of Soviet citizens gathering information in the hope of exposing the misdeeds of government officials? They would not trust one another, and each would realize the futility of any appeal to public opinion in a land that has no place for independent opinion or an independent press.

In my years of imprisonment and banishment, I met persons of decency and integrity on all levels of bureaucracy. I saw a little old man, a chief guard in a prison, quieting a brawl among the convicts by stretching out his hand and showing an ugly scar on it—the mark of a saber blow he had taken in protecting a convict. I met the Governor General of eastern Siberia, Kniazev, who held it the highest duty of his office to protect the rights of individuals and defend the law against encroachments and abuses by the gendarmes and minor officials.

Why is it impossible to imagine a man of moral integrity in a posi-

tion near the top of the Soviet bureaucracy? Not only because a man of independence and honor could never reach a high position in the Soviet despotism and would hardly survive all the purges, but also because the rigid scale of values of the Soviet regime excludes and weeds out such qualities as decency, dignity, and independence in those who serve the Moloch of the totalitarian state. The iron grip of the Kremlin leaves no place for simple human feelings and sympathy.

In my years of wandering in foreign countries, after the defeat of democracy in Russia, I have realized the deep and tragic impact of the Communist coup—the glorified “ten days”—on world affairs. In Italy, France, Germany, and Austria my wife and I saw Communist parties engaged in a bitter struggle against liberal forces—especially the moderate Socialists—trying to undermine people’s devotion to democratic institutions, to kindle nationalistic passions, occasionally even joining with the forces of darkest reaction in order to weaken the existing system supported by the majority. Everywhere in Europe local Communist parties operated as battering rams directed by an invisible force from the Kremlin against the strongholds of freedom and democracy. Communism has been a force of reaction, disorder, and war in Europe.

Time and again I have asked myself what the course of events in the world would have been after World War I if Russia had not emerged from it as a totalitarian dictatorship. Neither Mussolini in Italy nor Hitler in Germany would have come to power if the local Communists, supported and directed by Moscow, had not paved their way to victory. Without Hitler, there would have been no Molotov-Ribbentrop treaty to usher in World War II.

Going further back, one may answer that Lenin’s coup would have been impossible in Russia if the second Russian revolution had not exploded in the midst of war, if the country had entered the road of constitutional reforms a decade earlier, after the first revolution.

Historical events are interwoven in a fantastic pattern. Contemporaries find it hard to discern its intricate designs, and the impact of the Russian Drama is one of the greatest mysteries of our time. I do not pretend to have solved this mystery, but perhaps this book will make the reader realize that the time and events described have more than a casual relation to, and bearing on, the dire problems the world is facing now.

W. S. W.

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